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ABSTRACT

This proposal for urban community education centers defends the critical need for supplementary educational programs in academic, vocational, cultural, recreational, health, and other related services for urban ghetto residents beyond school age. The centers would be human resource programs, organized within a local area and using school facilities as a base. The centers would also provide counseling service and guidance in using available welfare agencies. Although not duplicating the narrower functions of the traditional school, the centers would offer preschool programs to help prevent learning disabilities, and provide programs in tutoring, recreation, and adult education. The centers would also draw on the resources of the non-ghetto community--business, labor, and other occupational organizations--for both counseling and volunteer personnel. (KG)

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AN URBAN EDUCATION FIRST PRINCIPLE: COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTERS

I. Comprehensive Education

Everything that is important, everything vital, enduring and pervasive, has a first principle on which it is founded and from which it derives its total structure and operational unity. In arithmetic, everything depends on knowing what a unit is because every number is a combination of units. Philosophers have pointed out that science is not a mere collection of facts, but depends on a unifying principle that not only gives coherence to the facts, but also arranges them in an order of importance. The founding fathers took as their first principle the "inalienable rights" of all men. There is also a first principle involved in the need of human beings for education and in the response of institutionalized education to fill the need.

In momentary disregard of current conventions and in a return to first principles, education has to be regarded as a comprehensive process from birth to death, which includes the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual development of a human being, to the extent that his activities are open to self-influence or influence by others. Even the physiological processes of the human organism are at least partially open to influence; we evidence a need for proper diet, proper exercise, and proper medication during illness. Unlike any other kind of organism, man can influence his own physical survival, and to the extent that such influence is possible, education is also somehow involved. Our English word doctor comes from the Latin term meaning "teacher"; a doctor was once regarded as a person who taught people how to make themselves well. On the other hand, education also includes training in the arts and sciences, the kind of activities usually associated with the classroom. In between the purely physical or physiological on the one hand, and classroom

academics on the other, there is a whole range of influences that human beings bring to bear on themselves and others; these may be properly termed educational. They include one's family, friends and associates, religious commitment, newspapers and other media, advertisements, recreational facilities, hobbies, contact with nature or with machinery in occupation or leisure, and the very physical surroundings in which one lives and works. All of these influences develop a human being for better or for worse. They are a part of comprehensive education, and to see education in this comprehensive way is to grasp a first principle in that life of man that makes him a man, and not merely a biological organism struggling to adapt itself to a purely physical environment.

Man not only adapts to his environment, he makes and remakes it. He adapts his environment to him. When it is cold, he builds fires or puts on warmer clothing. When it is dark, he makes lights. When he travels, even into outer space, he takes his environment -- his food, his pressurized clothing, his oxygen, his heat, and his light along with him. In addition, man lives in a social environment, which he can also control. Theoretically, if he lives, for instance, in a ghetto area, he can control his housing by moving out, his education by improving it, his culture by upgrading his tastes, and his recreation by building proper facilities. However, the facts of history, while headlining man's success in controlling his physical surroundings through primitive arts and later through technology, have ignored the great urban masses who live in a subhuman social environment over which they have no effective control. Here that full development of man which has been characterized as comprehensive education has somehow failed. For a variety of reasons, too complex to be listed here, a first principle of

human education has been violated by an affluent society that permits slums, by a middle-class society that is indifferent to the "inalienable rights" of its poor, and by an educated society that often ranks the dignity of human beings by their income or -- what is worse -- by the color of their skin.

If man can gain such dazzling triumphs over his physical surroundings as are evidenced in modern technology, why has he failed in the remaking of a much more important environment - the social one that exists in our slums? The answer points to the problem of education -- educating the general public to help less favored human beings, and then giving these human beings a better comprehensive education to which they have an "inalienable right" in our society. To bring a truly human comprehensive education to people in depressed areas is a response to the first principle in the development of human beings. It is the underlying reason for a community education center which, leaving the conventional classroom to continue its usual activities, concentrates on the other aspects of human fulfillment which the formal school program does not include.

To state this concept in a more summary form education can be taken in a general and specific sense. In its narrower meaning, it is the sum total of the activities associated with today's classrooms and rightly named formal education. But in its wider and more generic sense, education is a process that goes on throughout our lives. Is there any reason why the school, considered now as a purely physical facility -- a building and its grounds -- should be restricted to education in that first, formal and specific meaning indicated above? This was a decision made by earlier generations when life

was simpler, the social environment more stable and salutary, and homes capable of exercising a much greater and more positive educational influence than they do now. Yet in these days when family life has changed, religion has less influence, and poverty itself has become a greater source of social evils, there are cogent reasons why the school building itself should be put to use as better instruments in the total education of human beings. It can be made a center for preschool, coschool, and postschool facilities to insure that each needy individual, young and old, can get a proper, more complete opportunity for a wholesome comprehensive education. A community education center is itself a first principle in the social reconstruction of the ghetto environment. It is an instrument for filling in the large margin of human needs which the conventional classroom cannot respond.

II. History and Our Age.

In the 19th Century, after England had passed its Poor Laws to aid the victims left behind by the Industrial Revolution, Herbert Spencer, the greatest social philosopher of the time, had some grave criticisms. Relief money for the poor classes seemed to keep alive a helpless minority that should be allowed to perish according to the natural evolutionary principle of the survival of the fittest. A second was that mere handouts tended to discourage the enterprising spirit which would lead to jobs and constructive citizenship.

The fallacious logic and sheer brutality of Spencer's first argument have long since been abandoned by all but a small fraction of die-hards in the Western world; in America the truth that being a man implies a willingness to help other men, is generally acknowledged today at least in principle.

Spencer's second argument is no longer relevant in an age when welfare agencies operate on the principle of helping others to help themselves. History has, therefore, been harsh on Spencer's philosophy.

In our present period of rapid change, history can give us its judgments on our own social performance while we are still around to hear them and to make the necessary readjustments. Our own nation is now far more enlightened than in the 19th Century if only because we can profit from this century. Our capitalistic economy has taken a course far different from the one predicted by its Marxian prophets a century ago. In contrast to Spencer's view, we have, for instance, learned to regard our great masses of poor not as ne'er-do-wells responsible for their lot but as those who have been forced into their status by the very factors that have, at the same time made our society the most affluent ever known. In addition to the lessons of history, we have knowledge furnished by the social sciences and other disciplines to help us deal with the poverty problem. Economically, we are far better equipped to improve the slums than was Spencer's England or a younger United States. In contrast to Spencer's first argument, there is a willingness on the part of great numbers of our people to aid their less privileged fellow citizens. We have means of solving the poverty problem; our challenge is to put together all of our resources, human and material, into the kind of massive effort demanded by the massiveness of the problem itself. It is a problem of comprehensive education and given all of our resources, our land, our money, our manpower, and the know-how we have obtained through history, the social sciences, and our own present experiences in the 1960's, we have all the means to make history's verdict positive. The solution of our human problem should be our end, and history will judge us in that light. Our technology

whether in the minute recesses of the atom or the far stretches of space, can never be more than a means to something else. That something else is the human condition, shaped by comprehensive education experienced from birth to death.

From the time of Socrates, education has had a tradition of leading society rather than trying to catch up with it. Today, given the conditions in the modern American city, there are grounds for wondering whether or not the roles have been reversed. If this seems too stong a judgment, it will surely be agreed that education, in the wise and comprehensive sense, is at least facing problems as big as the urban crisis itself. Society is changing so rapidly that even those who seemed adequately prepared for life a generation ago, now find that their education is out of date. If this is true at a general level, the lag is bound to be felt even more forcefully in the ghetto areas.

The use of the school to supplement education in its narrow sense, is a response to a type of society quite different from the one in which the American school system was founded. Today the reality of change is almost as standardized as were the static conditions of another day. One dramatic illustration of change and its impact on human beings occurred in the field of knowledge itself. The population explosion that followed World War II was paralleled by a knowledge explosion; and though advances in knowledge may be of immediate interest only to the expert, they almost always have repercussions in technology.

Einstein's formula $\underline{E=mc^2}$ was once a remote formula understood by only a few physicists. Yet as the principle which lead to the atom bomb, it has had more impact on diplomacy and general international politics of the last

quarter-century than any law made by man. Earlier, Galvani seemed to be performing a trivial trick when he caused a frog's leg to twitch when stimulated by an electric current, but out of Galvani's work came television. Both Galvani and the work of Einstein antedate World War II, but they provide compelling evidence of the way scientific breakthroughs affect not only science or those who work in science-related industries but the very fabric of practical everyday life. Because the tempo of all manmade changes has been accelerated in the contemporary world, the time interval has lessened between theoretical advance in science and technological applications. Science and technology are daily changing the social environment of man. In view of our change-dominated society, it is legitimate to ask whether formal schooling is enough as the sole public instrument of education.

We have been living through a Second Industrial Revolution. This new age has left in its fallout great masses of men like those for whom 19th Century England passed its poor laws. Benjamin Disraeli, a prime minister of England during that period, declared that his country had been divided into "two nations", the rich and the poor. This language is almost identical with that used in the report by the Presidential Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Even before this report was issued, thoughtful Americans, feeling the pulse of our cities and making their judgment in the context of history, were telling us that the urban crisis is the greatest faced by the nation since the Civil War. From one viewpoint, it may be greater than that bitter and divisive struggle between the States, for wars can be won by a relatively simple formula - firepower and the proper use of it. However, our present domestic emergency is more subtle than war to define, more difficult to approach, more pressing for response and more threatening in its consequences.

More than any other crisis we have faced as a nation, our present urban problem involves the mysteries of human hearts and the depth of human personalities.

III. The Real Need

In addressing any crisis that affects the very spirit of man, motivation is as important as techniques, and indeed both considerations in the end are so intimately intertwined that they can be separated only in a kind of academic way. When privileged classes favor programs only to prevent summer riots, they use a frame of reference that American political philosophy has outgrown. Such a reference-frame is a selfish one, and it is likely to boomerang on those who use it. When the poor think that the rich are aiding them only for the advantages of the rich themselves, the obvious breach that exists today between social groups, racial or otherwise, is not likely to heal. On the other hand, today's and tomorrow's underprivileged citizens have rights - rights as human beings, spelled out by the Constitution. Their "inalienable rights" are the first principles of our nation. One of these rights is that of equal opportunity; opportunity not merely to enjoy the necessities of life, but the privileges that are part of America.

Another spurious perspective is to think that the urban crisis will be resolved only by economic aid. Initially, of course, the problem <u>is</u> economic; this truth cannot be emphasized enough. Human beings need food, clothing, and shelter -- the basic necessities of life -- but they also have a right to share in higher satisfactions. They have a right to self-fulfillment as human beings. Our nation has an obligation to provide opportunities for more than merely economic advancement. In an affluent society, economic achievement

appears more and more for what it is, a means to the achievement of higher goals. A nation with an unemployment margin of only 4 percent of its work force probably does not approach the figure of being 96 percent happy.

A third spurious perspective is to look for a solution to the urban crisis only in terms of institutionalized organization, supported by public funds. However dependent on the resources of government, a successful assault upon the ghetto problem requires person-to-person contact between living people from various social groups. Here the college youth, so often dismissed as a negative generation by many adults, provide a working model through the accepted inter-group relationships which are found on most college campuses. In the case of a slightly or very much older generation, it is easy for a person of proper means to contribute to a favorite "charity", (this practice should by all means be encouraged), but in itself, it is not enough. Givers have to give of themselves,of their time and effort, at work and at leisure, if a national assault on poverty programs is to be efficacious. Such giving of self, rather than of merely material means, can be as beneficial to the giver as to the receiver. Nevertheless, from a large-scale point of view, it is logical that government take the lead in any massive programs for the uplift of ghetto communities.

Given all the dimensions of the problem - academic, social, phsychological, economic, and personal - such government programs must consider education as a central instrument. However, in place of the partial education achieved in the conventional classroom, comprehensive education must be the prime concern.

To sum up, the rapid pace of history has enabled us to be our own judges at least in social performance, and there is enough evidence at hand to indicate that we have failed our urban masses. There is need for an expanded and

supplementary educational program to aid the disadvantaged. This new concept involves a facility to coordinate the opportunities provided by existing welfare agencies, and to afford a focus for additional, highly constructive educational services that the present school program, already so heavily burdened, cannot be asked to bear. That is what a community education center is all about.

IV. The Community Education Center

A community education center is a human resource program, organized within a local area and supplementary to the school in its traditional sense. It provides academic, vocational, cultural, recreational, health, and other related services according to a priority of area and personal needs. It thus gives needy citizens of all ages in New York State opportunities for self-improvement in basic skills, and other means of self-fulfillment.

A representative example of a center's activity would be education for family living with its problems of child care, home-school relations, consumer buying, and recreation for all age groups. Facilities would be available for supplementary training, academic and vocational, and for the cultivation of constructive hobbies. Athletics would be an essential part of a center's program. Opportunities would be provided for the interaction of minority groups with others. "Big brother" relationships would be encouraged. Community entertainment programs would be sponsored for various age levels. Leadership and initiative would be fostered through the conducting of neighborhood projects. Emphasis would be placed upon special tutoring for pupils who need corrective work as well as for those who show promise of excellence. Cultural programs would be provided from within community and with the aid of outside competencies.

A community education center would use counselled referrals to help the needy make maximum use of existing welfare agencies. As a supplement to those agencies, it would work at a grass roots level and on a person-to-person basis. Its aim in this respect should be to insure that each needy individual be directed to the appropriate facility, where such exists, and that each makes optimum use of existing welfare opportunities.

Though not duplicating the work of the school, it should anticipate it (preschool programs), support it (coschool training and recreation), and continues it (adult education). A center could be physically located in a school building, using the classrooms and other recreational facilities that otherwise, with their immense potential stand idle in the later afternoons and early evenings, on weekends, and during vacation periods. It would be organized and administered under a Board selected at a local level, and it must respect the needs as felt and defined by the needy themselves.

A community education center should seek to humanize and personalize all aspects of its operation from planning to that end result of self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-fulfillment it aims to foster in all those using its services. As another aspect of its emphasis on person-to-person interaction, it would get the non-ghetto community involved. It would call upon the concerns and competencies of business, labor, and other occupational groups and religious communities. At both individual and group level, members of these other communities would be contacted by a center and asked to provide volunteers whose scheduled services may take a variety of forms and in many times and places -- evenings, weekends, and other occasions. In this fashion, men and women of all ages and classes would have not only the opportunity

to uplift the disadvantaged, but also an outlet for their own dedication. The fact that such volunteers are available is indicated by the number of applicants for the Peace Corps, and by the positive response of the non-Negro community in the civil rights movement. On the typical college campus, there is a huge untapped reservior of dedicated youth anxious to make a constructive contribution to society. As an example of their potential contributions, they could be tutors or supervisors of recreation. Many of them also have skills and hobbies.

Thus, a community education center would achieve a close person-to-person cooperation between home and school, pupil and teacher, the unemployed and prospective employers, the unskilled worker and the person who could show the deprived how to overcome economic handicaps. It should improve relations between human beings and human beings.

It is almost a truism to say that the success of a center depends on the director. Though an administrator, he must be far more. Under him, apart from usual concerns with the budget, the two most important areas are thoæ of program and personnel. Both concerns require a combination of imaginative projection and managerial skill, an ability to lead as well as to listen, a power to appraise both people and proposals, a compassion to appreciate human need, and a public relations sense to attract the necessary help from outside expertise. The image the director creates for himself may well be the image of a whole center.

V. A Time for Action

A community education center is more than a physical entity, it is an educational and cultural focus. It projects ideas as well as receive them. While providing for future goals, it has a program of activities that are worthwhile in themselves. It recognizes the immediate priority of economic opportunities, but also recognizes that fulfillment is more than having an adequate income. A center operated on the principle that the time has passed when the disadvantaged can be approached through abstract moralism and through promises concerning the remote future. The ghetto wants action and wants it now. A community education center is a response to this desire.

Again, in the spirit of catching up with ourselves, it may be said that existing techniques for dealing with the urban crisis, valuable as they are, have not been enough. Even their expansion, again however valuable and necessary, will not overtake the conditions in the ghettos; because such conditions are getting worse. The program of community education centers is an effort to rethink the very categories in which urban problems are approached. It is a program to exploit more fully the most powerful of all the agencies which have shaped our culture, namely the school. It uses the physical facilities of the school as a base, only now the concern is not as much with education in the narrow sense as essentially a classroom activity for those between kindergarten and the fourth year of high school. The concern is with education in the widest sense of the word, a comprehensive process that goes on prior to school, outside school hours, and after the normal years of schooling are complete.

Traditionally, the American school has been the most effective means of getting to the masses of our citizens in a truly systematic way. This tradition animates the community education centers in an age when for great masses of people, the more restricted kind of education that goes on in the usual daily classroom is no longer an adequate preparation for life.

In the treatment of disease, a doctor, while first trying to relieve painful symptoms, realizes that his science and art must attack the primary causes of the illness - the germs or the impaired organ that only an operation can reach. Without this attention to causes, even the pain will return when sedation wears off. In the social order, money by itself will bring at most only temporary relief to deprived persons; an assault must be made on the causes of their ills. This is generally a lack of that proper comprehensive education that is a first principle of successful human development. The need for this response is urgent. The patient does not have a simple headache or a common cold that will eventually go away even without medication. He is in the emergency room, and as in the case of the doctor when he was regarded as a teacher, society must show him how to get well. It must attack causes. There is an urgent need to implement the community education center as a first principle in meeting the most serious domestic problem in the history of the United States.

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